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INFO RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS IMMEDIATE 0704
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY IMMEDIATE 0348
RUEHNK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT IMMEDIATE 0303
RUEHOU/AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU IMMEDIATE 0301
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 0534
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TAGS: MARR ML PINR PREL PTER
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR ATTENDS CLOSING CEREMONY OF JCET
TRAINING OF MALIAN ARMY ETIA 6

Classified By: Ambassador Gillian A. Milovanovic, for reasons 1.4 (b) (d).

¶1. (S) On December 10 the Ambassador participated in the closing ceremony of a Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) exercise of Malian Army Echelon Tactique Interarme (ETIA) 6, in Segou. ETIA 6 is based in Tessalit, a town in the Kidal Region of Northern Mali. Captain Jason van Camp and Master Sergeant James Rainville of the 10th Army Special Forces Group led the training. The JCET ran from November 1-December 10. At present full strength, ETIA 6 numbers 142, but because a number of troops were suffering from malaria and medicine was lacking, fewer than 100 were able to participate.

¶2. (S) Van Camp said ETIA 6 Commander, Major Felix Diallo, was a dedicated and credible leader. The previous ETIA Commander, who had started the JCET, was not motivated, did not have a good attitude, and told the JCET team he had no desire to be in the army. The inadequate commander was replaced with the present commander, who was a far better performer. The men were motivated when they were given adequate food and water. This was perceived to be a problem when training started, and the men reluctantly responded to orders and otherwise lazed about in the shade. It turned out, according to Rainville, that the entire unit of 142 was only allotted 11 kilograms of meat per day, served as a stew on grain with scraps and leftovers re-boiled for soup as dinner. When JCET members paid for an occasional sheep to supplement the inadequate rations, however, the troops participated vigorously and enthusiastically in the training. Loyalty to Mali or to the command did not appear to be an issue.

¶3. (S) In terms of weapons and marksmanship, many soldiers said they had never fired a weapon before in their life, and there was only one rifle magazine available for each soldier. After the training, 90 percent were effective at firing from multiple static positions, but need additional training for fire and maneuver exercises at the squad level. The 14 Landcruisers donated by the USG on October 20, five of which were equipped with Harris radios, were on site for the training. The radios, with on-off switches to prevent them from draining vehicle batteries when shut off, functioned well. The vehicles will move with the ETIA to Tessalit and will be used to patrol the vast, open desert spaces near the border with Algeria. While there was adequate fuel during training, the fuel was of poor and uneven quality, making operating vehicles an uncertain proposition. Access to adequate quantities and quality of fuel remains a problem

when deployed, though USG assistance is also being directed to this issue.

¶4. (S) The JCET closed with a long-range movement and a culmination exercise in which a simulated operations order was issued to kill or capture enemy units. The ETIA demonstrated good basic mission planning but needs more work in terms of company level training on offensive operations. There was a very well-received MEDCAP in nearby Ngodila Village. The next JCET training of ETIA 6 is scheduled for April 2010.

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